

veterans clinics. Let's move it. That is my effort. That is Senator LANDRIEU's effort, which again is being objected to, moving this focused clinics bill, by the Senator from Vermont. I find that very unfortunate, but I will certainly continue to demand that we pass this and continue to talk regarding all of the other important veterans' issues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, we talk about holding hostage. The distinguished junior Senator from Louisiana pointed out that 43 Senators voted against comprehensive legislation that is supported by virtually every veterans organization in this country. The arithmetic is 43 voted against it, that is true. How many voted for it? Fifty-six voted for it and 1 was absent who would have voted for it. Fifty-seven voted for comprehensive legislation, 43 voted against it.

So when the Senator talks about holding veterans hostage, I would suggest to my friend from Louisiana that maybe instead of filibustering this bill and requiring an undemocratic 60 votes, let the majority rule.

The American people want us to pass this legislation. If you choose not to vote for it, that is your right. But I do urge you not to hold us hostage by demanding 60 votes when a very strong majority wants to see it passed.

With that, Mr. President, I would object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, can you tell me the order of business we are in now?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 40 seconds remaining on the current issue, following which we will proceed to executive session.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield back that time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF WANDA FELTON TO BE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EXPORT-IMPORT BANK OF THE UNITED STATES

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Wanda Felton, of New York, to be First Vice President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The remaining time until 3:30 p.m. will be for debate on the Felton nomination.

The Senator from Illinois.

AMERICAN CURES ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a generation ago, an AIDS diagnosis meant a sure and agonizing death. It was 23 years ago, when I was in the House of Representatives, when I was walking to

the Chamber for a vote when I saw a colleague and friend, Tom McMillen, a Congressman from Maryland, coming my way. You would not miss Tom McMillen. He played in the NBA. He was tall. As he passed by on the sidewalk, he stopped and said: Magic has AIDS. It was a stunning announcement that Magic Johnson had been diagnosed with AIDS. The reality is that was 23 years ago. At the time we felt this was a death verdict, there was no way to escape it.

Last month American researchers revealed that a second American baby born with HIV has apparently been cured of the virus with drugs delivered just minutes after birth.

How far we have come in 23 years—from an AIDS diagnosis meaning certain death to being able to cure for the second time a baby born with HIV with drugs delivered minutes after birth.

These babies were treated as part of a research program at the National Institutes of Health. Their apparent cures offer real hope for a quarter of a million babies who were born into the world this year with HIV—many of them in desperately poor nations.

It is not the only happening when it comes to medical research, by a long shot. In my home State of Illinois, Dr. Jose Oberholzer from the University of Illinois-Chicago and Dr. Xunrong Luo from Northwestern University are among scores of researchers throughout the country on an NIH-sponsored project to find a cure for Type 1 diabetes.

Do you know anyone with type 1 diabetes? I do. To think that we are close enough to even consider the possibility of a cure should spur us all on to want more research in this area done as quickly as possible.

These two doctors are part of an effort called the Clinical Islet Transplantation Consortium. Islets are a group of beta cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes destroys these cells. Transplanting healthy beta cells into the liver of someone with type 1 diabetes can enable the person's body to start producing insulin on its own—a functional cure for type 1 diabetes.

This is not just a theory; it is starting to show results when it comes to this clinical research.

Why do I raise these amazing medical research stories on the floor of the Senate? Because the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives each year vote on how much money we are going to put into the National Institutes of Health, and we have had some sad outcomes in recent years.

Did you know that over the last 10 years we have been unwilling to give the National Institutes of Health even a cost-of-living adjustment? So each year they have fallen behind in medical research just because of inflation. They have fallen behind 22 percent in awarding research grants such as the ones I just described because we have failed to provide a cost-of-living adjustment for them.

Does anyone believe we are saving money by cutting back on medical research? If they do, they are just plain wrong.

They had a program announced about a month ago at NIH called the AMP Program. It is a new undertaking. The 10 largest pharmaceutical companies have put up \$150 million—not a great amount of money for successful pharmaceutical companies but an investment—to be matched by NIH, and they are setting out to use human genomic mapping and cell information to find cures for Alzheimer's, type 1 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Can we afford this? Can we afford this research? Do you know what we paid last year in Medicare and Medicaid just for Alzheimer's patients? It was \$203 billion—1 year. If we can, through our research, find a way to at least delay, if not cure, Alzheimer's, think of the misery that will be spared these poor families who suffer from Alzheimer's and think of the money we will save.

Are we so shortsighted as a nation that we have forgotten that medical research not only finds cures but saves us money that would otherwise be spent for medical care?

That is why I introduced, 2 weeks ago, the American Cures Act. It is different. There are not a lot of proposals like it before Congress. What I am doing with this proposal is trying to get Congress, on both sides of the aisle, in both Chambers, to make a commitment to American medical research, American cures.

Here is the commitment: Over the next 10 years, I want a commitment that we will increase the funding in medical research beyond inflation 5 percent a year—5 percent—for the National Institutes of Health, for the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Defense medical research, and the Veterans' Administration medical research.

What is the cost of that? The cost of that is \$150 billion over 10 years—to make a commitment to go forward on medical research. It is a lot of money. It is a lot of money until you consider what the cost is each year of Alzheimer's—\$200 billion—not to mention the cost of diabetes, arthritis, and so many other illnesses and diseases that call for huge investments when it comes to medical care.

Where in the world can we get \$150 billion over 10 years? Where could we possibly find it? Let me give you a starting place. Increase the Federal tax on tobacco products by 95 cents. I am for that. I will tell you why I am for it. I have been fighting tobacco as long as I have been in Congress—the House and Senate—and what I have discovered is, if you want to discourage young people from smoking, taking up tobacco addictions that will ultimately cost them their lives, raise the price of the product. They stop buying it.

In my lifetime, we have seen the percentage of Americans smoking cut in

half. So raising that tobacco tax gives us money for medical research and reduces the likelihood that people will become addicted to nicotine and tobacco.

Mr. President, 700,000 Americans will not take up the tobacco habit if we raise that tax 95 cents. It is money well spent on medical research.

If we do not do this, what happens? We fail to find the cures for diseases, we continue to make massive expenditures in Medicare and Medicaid and other health programs, and we watch the world pass us by.

If the United States decides to retreat when it comes to biomedical research, other countries are ready to step in. Now, today, China is investing 12 to 20 percent more each year in government research and medical research—each year. In 8 years China will surpass the United States in dollars spent on government research and medical research. Are we ready to let that happen? I hope not.

For the sake of the people who live in this country who need cures for these diseases, and help, for the sake of the cost to our health care system that all of this medical challenge presents, and if we want to maintain a lead when it comes to researchers and doctors and hospitals, it is time for us on a bipartisan basis to make a commitment to medical research.

I hope others will join in cosponsoring this American Cures Act. A number have done this already, and I thank them for joining me. One of them is on the floor, my colleague from California Mrs. BOXER. She is always by my side. We have fought a lot of these battles together. And the list goes on: Senators REED, BROWN, HIRONO, FEINSTEIN, GILLIBRAND, CARDIN, HAGEN, CASEY, MARKEY, and MIKULSKI, and we are just getting started. I might also say that Congresswoman ANNA ESHOO is cosponsoring this measure in the House.

I cannot think of a more important thing that we can do to make this a better, safer nation, to reward research, to find cures for diseases, and to make sure our country continues to lead the world when it comes to biomedical research.

I hope my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Illinois for his leadership in making our people healthier than they otherwise would be. He talked about the battles we have had making sure that we crack down on the tobacco companies that told us for years smoking was safe—as a matter of fact, do it, it will relax you—and they denied the science.

We lived through those years. Many years ago, I worked with then-Senator Lautenberg—and Senator DURBIN led the charge in the House—to stop smoking on airplanes. I remember coming

home from these long trips and literally reeking of cigarette smoke—I never smoked in my life, but just sitting around it in the airplanes.

Now we are working together on NIH issues. We are very upset about some of the false claims that are being made about ecigarettes, and we want the truth out.

So before he leaves the floor, I want to thank the Senator.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. President, I am here for only a couple minutes to express my chagrin, my disappointment, my shock that not one Republican voted with Democrats to make sure women have equal pay to men. What a simple concept: If you work a job that is the same as a man, the pay should be equal, and that means women can get a fair shot in the workplace. And how do we know it is not happening? We know because there are statistics that prove that women are earning, on average, \$11,000 less than a man for the same job; and that is \$11,000 a year. Over the course of a lifetime, it is over \$400,000.

Our Republican friends, in searching to come up with a reason—I do not know their reason; I do not get their reason—but this is what they said. They said—MITCH MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, said in a press conference—and I just read it; I hope I am wrong, and maybe he did not say this—but he said: We are hurting the very same people we are trying to help in this legislation.

Now, somebody explain to me how it hurts a woman to have equal pay with a man for the same job. How does it hurt a woman to be able to afford a better place to live with that \$11,000 a year, or a better school, to send her child to college, or just to enjoy a family vacation or a used car that maybe they want to buy—or, or, or.

It is unbelievable to me. Every Republican voted against equal pay today for women. What is even more disturbing, every Republican voted to filibuster equal pay for women, meaning they voted against our even taking up the subject. They stopped us. We had a good, solid majority of Democrats—54. We just wanted to take it up and work on it and get it through. They filibustered this. It is, to me, amazing.

Senator MCCONNELL said that Democrats are obsessed with this issue of equal pay for equal work. OK, I will take it. I am obsessed. I want equal pay for women.

We are here in the U.S. Senate. Everyone knows what we earn, and everyone knows that a woman Senator makes the same as a man Senator. We have the same pension options and health care options, and that is the fair way. All the equal pay for equal work act says is: We want to enforce the civil rights laws that demand it. But employers now harass you, fire you, stop you from finding out what your colleague across the aisle makes.

If you even ask someone: I want to just check, am I getting paid fairly? I

am getting paid \$45,000 a year, and we do the same job. Can you tell me?—that alone—that alone—makes that worker a target for dismissal, harassment, et cetera.

This should not be. We should be able to find out and ask. That is all we are trying to do here. We are trying to make sure that the Civil Rights Act which passed in the 1960s actually works. Because the Civil Rights Act said: equal pay for equal work. But then all these rules came down and loopholes came down, and employers can fire you, harass you, or do whatever, if you even ask about it.

Everyone knows—I should not say “everyone”—a lot of people understand the Lilly Ledbetter case. Lilly Ledbetter worked at a tire company. She was a manager. She was considered one of the top people in the company who did this work. She found out she was getting paid thousands of dollars less by the owner of the tire factory. She sued.

She won her lawsuit at the lower level. Then it went all the way to the Supreme Court. They said: Sorry, you waited too long to file your lawsuit. What? She said: I could not find out about it. I did not find out about it, she said, until a coworker left me a note and said:

Lilly, I admire you. You're great. Do you know you're getting paid X thousands less a year than your male counterpart?

But she did not find it out for many years. So we had to fix that problem. BARBARA MIKULSKI led us, and the President led us. He signed the bill, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which expands the statute of limitations so when you find out you have been discriminated against you can bring a lawsuit.

All this is, is you can find out for sure earlier by asking someone. So I am in shock. Do not tell me women do not want fair pay, all they care about is flexibility. You cannot buy groceries with flexibility. If you want flexibility in the workplace, you can work that out. But set your pay first. I have employees, men and women, who want to get their pay settled. Then they will say: Is it okay if I work 4 days at the same level, but then I do not get paid for that fifth? That is fine if that is the flexibility workers want. But do not substitute flexibility and say: Well, if you want to work 4 days a week, we will give you that, but, guess what, you are going to be paid less for the job than a man. Please.

Yes, we are obsessed with this. We are because we Democrats believe in justice and fairness and equality, not just in words and speeches and reading great quotes from our Founders, but in reality.

That means, in reality, we want a woman in the workplace to be able to find out if she is getting paid fairly. I am disappointed, but I am also excited that HARRY REID is going to bring this back again and again and again in the hopes that our Republicans in the Senate relent and understand this is about